

Political and Journalistic Translation Courses and the Market Demand in Iran

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Abstract

Today world is the world of information exchange in a rapid manner. Keeping pace with such rapid world requires being informed of information. In addition, people need to be aware of international news. This is the task of translators to provide the countries with the latest news and information. Therefore, translation industry demands more attention in such environment. Its requirements are not satisfied just by experience; rather transjournalists should be equipped with translating knowledge and science so that they can meet demands of the market. Technical writing, editing, knowledge of information technology, writing summary and text analysis are among skills that now translators are suggested to be equipped with, especially in translating political and journalistic texts. Translator training programs at higher education should be in consistency with media market demands; as a result, such transjournalists would be trained in such a way that can survive in the market successfully. The aim of this paper was to investigate consistency between media market demand and courses related to translating political and journalistic texts in translator training programs at higher education level in Iran. By investigation of market demands and comparison of them with educational goals stated in related lesson plans for translator training classes it can be realized that whether there is consistency between what is needed by market and what is trained in reality in universities to translation students. Hypothesis of the research was as follows: courses related to translating political and journalistic texts in translator training program at higher education in Iran are not consistent with media market demands.

Keywords: news translator, media translation, translator training, political texts translation, journalistic texts translation

Introduction

Professionalization of Training

As stated by Biel (2010) emphasis in recent literature is mostly on what he calls “professional realism of training” in the field of translator training at university level. According to Kelly (2005) the professionalization of training is achieved by simulating professional practice for students, which is possible through following activities: linking teaching to professional environments, role-playing (such as client, terminologist, reviser, and translator), practicing technical aspects of the profession, visits to translation agencies and work placements, real-life projects.

Training for Profession

According to Kelly (2005), in training translators with translation profession aim in mind, it is needed to consider requirements of this profession. A necessary component in current curriculum for translation training is computer applications. She believes that there is considerable pressure to use well known translation software such as translation memory. Thus, it is necessary to train

translation students of basics and general points of using such programs. In addition, simulating professional practice is considered as a standard in translation teaching classes, which can be realized through realistic translation works, deadlines and so on. It is also useful for students to seek for work placements as another component in educational curriculum. In fact, it is in this stage of the training that they are really engaged in the profession of translation.

Various computer-related technologies can be integrated in the process of translation production. Now many translators regard word processing programs as a normal way of producing target text. Most traditional tools of translators have turned to modern ones, for example, currently most of paper dictionaries can be found in electronic version too. Electronic mail systems are also another benefits of modern technology for translators by which the speed of texts and produced translations exchange as well communication is increased (Newton, 1992). Translation memory (TM) software is another facility provided by new technology. According to Robinson (1997) such programs increases speed of translation and are very useful with repetitive translation tasks.

Robinson (1997) maintains that involving translators in the profession helps translating better, gaining better feeling about being translator, enhancing professional self-esteem. This involvement in the profession may be achieved by participating in the translation conferences, discussing with other translators and professionals in the field, keeping up with technological improvements in the field, learning to use new hardware and software and so on.

English Translator Training Program in Iran

Razmjou (2001) assumes that current curriculum of B.A. Translator Training Program in Iran does not meet today needs of the country. She studied about contents needed in translation curriculum and found following items as essential components in a translation curriculum: proficiency in first and second language, exposing students to various genres both in source and target language literature, reading courses on items implying socio-cultural aspects of language including advertisements, announcements, instructions, “specialized readings, including recently published articles and journals on theoretical and practical aspects of translation” (Discussion section, para. 4), “critical reading and writing courses in Persian and English prose” (Discussion section, para. 5) for familiarizing with two languages differences, courses on writing in various styles in both languages, “courses presenting the techniques and principles of editing, punctuation, and note-taking in both languages” to “sensitivity to the differences between discourse strategies in the two languages and improve the speed and organization of translation and interpreting process” (Discussion section, para. 5), listening and transcribing English tapes, speaking courses, “familiarizing students with different sources of information, such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, and the Internet” (Discussion section, para. 8). She also suggested additional courses to be included in curriculum of translator training program such as “dubbing, subtitling, sight translation, machine translation, and machine-assisted translation” (Discussion section, para. 9).

Journalistic Text Translation Unit in B.A. English Translator Training Program in Iran

B.A. English Translator Training Program in Iran includes 4 units for journalistic text reading and translation. The objective behinds this unit is to acquaint students to journalism terms and terminology, acquiring proficiency in translating journalistic texts. Acquainting to various English journalistic texts, journalism genre, reading skill development and vocabulary stock improvement are objectives enumerated for these units.

Political Text Translation Unit in B.A. English Translator Training Program in Iran

B.A. English Translator Training Program in Iran includes 2 units for political text translation. It is of theoretical type. The objective behind this is to acquaint students to political

concepts and terminology and their equivalents as well as the translation approaches for such texts. 34 hours should be dedicated to units for translating political texts.

Research Methodology

The research has been based on administering a questionnaire asking translators working in news agencies and newspapers about the consistency between their demands and translator training programs and their expectations of translators. Thus it is a field study and a descriptive research.

Subjects included transjournalists as well as international news editors and chief editors as translators' employers. There were as many as 60 respondents in this sample.

The instruments which was used in this research included questionnaire and translator training curriculum for political and journalistic texts' translation. Works by Kelly (2005), Newmark (1991), Samuelsson-Brown (2004), Sofer (2006), Gutiérrez (2006), Schäffner (2007) were used as sources for designing questionnaire items.

Data was collected through questionnaire. Rating scale was Likert scale evaluating attitude or behavior on a continuum from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree".

The received data were entered into SPSS software, version 20. Cronbach's Alpha was used for testing questionnaire reliability and Alpha value was obtained as 0.841 which suggests acceptable reliability for the questionnaire.

Results

Most of the news agencies and newspapers prefer to hire translators who are mainly competent in translating political texts, majority of them selected competency in translating political texts in the questionnaire.

Schäffner (2004) states that mass media has important role in politics as it mediates between politicians and public and informs mainly on political issues. In other words, political texts and issues characterize majority of media and news agencies.

Question 3 asked about respondents' opinion on the ability of the translator training curriculum of university in equipping students with skills required in recruitment as journalistic translator. 60% believed that current curriculum of translator training courses in universities do not well-equip students with skills required in recruitment as journalistic translator in news agencies and newspapers. It implies that current curriculum for training translators is somehow ineffective, especially in journalistic texts translation training.

Findings of this study indicated that almost all of the respondents supported the idea that current curriculum should be changed so that news and effective components are included.

Mackenzie (1998) mentioned extensive reading, essay writing and reading based discussion exercises as suggested activities for improving cultural knowledge of the target language as one of the main components of the curriculum of translator training. Inclusion of translation projects which can be carried out for such organizations as NGOs in curriculum can help translation trainees to become aware of professional world (Gonzalez Davies, 2004). According to translator training curriculum in Iran these are lacking in this program.

Findings related to Question 5 are in consistency with literature on translator training syllabus. Since all of the respondents agreed with the idea proposed in the question. Authors have suggested using field experts in various forms in translation classes. For instance, holding seminars with professional practitioners and field experts in related areas (Gonzalez Davies, 2004) and discussing with other translators and professionals in the field (Robinson, 1997), which help enhancing professional self-esteem and increase awareness of professional world in translation students. Additionally, Kelly (2005) suggests visiting translator training institutions by professional

translators or inviting graduates from the program itself in order to motivate students. An absolute majority of respondents including working translators and editors showed willingness for cooperating with universities as field experts.

In answering questions related to priority of skills in English and Persian in translating from Persian in English and vice versa, majority of respondents mentioned competency in writing skill is the in highest priority for them, whether in translation from English or Persian. It confirms Nord's (2005) characterization of a 'functional translator'. As she puts it a functional translator should be able to produce target text in such a way that it serves required function, even the source text has some problems in terms of writing and may be badly written, that is, s/he should have writing abilities. Accordingly this skill should be more emphasized compared to other skills in teaching translation. In consistency with findings in questions 7 and 8, respondents selected the same skill as the most important one needing more attention, as they stated that in their opinion writing skill should be in first priority in translator training courses, both in translating from English and from Persian.

Questions 13 and 14 asked about necessity of using and familiarity with PC related skills, especially word typing and translation aid software by news translators. An absolute majority of respondents viewed familiarity with PC related skills including word typing as a necessity for translators. Similarly, more than half of the respondents supported the idea provided in Question 14 that translators should utilize translation aid software in their work (61.7%). This confirms Samuelsson-Brown (2004) who argues that one of the requirements for becoming translator by design is learning to 'touch type'. In addition, Sofer (2006) believes that translation has become highly dependent on electronic tools so that translators cannot be a strange to latest developments and technologies. One of the characteristics of functional translator described by Nord (2005) is knowing how to use modern translation aids including electronic tools. Answers to Question 15 supported the idea that most of respondents consider applications related to word typing (Microsoft Office Word software as the first priority) and internet and web browsing (Internet Explorer as the second priority) as important software in translation task.

A majority of respondents (93.3%) believed that familiarity with the political situation in the world is important in recruitment of translators. As Ivanova says (as cited in Schäffner, 2007: 146): "Knowledge of culture-specific and sensitive aspects of political concepts, of associated values and attitudes, as well as knowledge of political phenomena in source and target culture are thus listed as decisive elements of translation competence for political communication."

About half of the respondents (51.7%) believed that content and structural adjustment of the news are not task of the translator and it should be assigned to editors in other sections of the news agency or newspaper. According to Chen (2011) the news translator should observe editorial policies and perspectives held by target news organizations. Such organizations hope that their views and stances are conveyed to the readers. In addition, Gutiérrez (2006) argues that translator should be able to edit the texts and add context to news stories for audiences so that there is balance between what is local and what is global. It is done so as to foreigner readers are able to understand the stories.

In question 21, the respondents were asked if they agreed with accepting apprentice without pay in translation unit of their institutes. Majority of the respondents were reluctant to accept apprentice, as 46.7% of them disagreed the question. However, getting a job as a trainee translator in a company has been mentioned as one of the requirements for becoming translator by design (Samuelsson-Brown, 2004). As stated by Kelly (2005), it is useful for translation students to seek for work placements as one of the components in educational curriculum. It is in this stage of the training that they are really engaged in the profession of translation.

Lack of sufficient familiarity with Persian language was regarded as the main problem of the translators by majority of respondent. It is in consistency with list of competences required by translators which was recommended by Schäffner (2000). She mentions linguistic competence on her list and describes that it is related to languages which are concerned. It is not just about target language. Students need to be competent equally in their mother tongue too.

When respondents were asked about readiness of translator training major graduates for journalism translation from the outset, 45% of them disagreed with the idea.

On the whole, over half of the respondents (55%) agreed that the most frequent applicants of journalistic texts translation in news agencies and newspapers are graduates of translator training major.

As it can be seen from answers given to Question 25, graduates from many various fields are working as transjournalist in news agencies and newspapers. It shows that there is not much consistency between university degree and the occupational position in such institutes. On the other hand, answers provided for question 25 suggest that having knowledge on the subject, in this case, political issues, is regarded highly important for translating journalistic texts. In addition, it can be concluded that having knowledge on the field is important for successful translation.

Mostly major and important news agencies and newspapers were mentioned as the sources for news. Hence it is recommended that those who are going to enter such institutes to assign news translation role should read more news by mentioned news agencies or newspapers. In addition, working and discussing on news reports of these institutes in classes of translation training will be useful so that students become familiar with their style of reporting and news writing.

As it was found, having university degree at translation studies for translators of news agencies and newspapers was considered very important for 38.3% of the respondents.

Samuelsson-Brown (2004) argues that there are some requirements for becoming translator by design including:

- Education to university level by attaining your basic degree in modern languages or Linguistics
- Completing a postgraduate course in translation studies

The last question asked about university degree of translator. Most of the respondents stated that university degree of translator in respective institutes should be BA. Thus it is better to have enough education and training at BA level so that students are well prepared for acting in professional market.

Analysis of the Hypothesis

Research hypothesis states:

Courses related to translating political and journalistic texts in translator training program at higher education in Iran are not consistent with media market demands

Table 1. One Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
consistency	60	2.4250	.58095	.07500

Table 2. One Sample Test

	Test Value = 3					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
consistency	-7.667	59	.000	-.57500	-.7251	-.4249

T-test was used for testing this hypothesis. Output of SPSS software for t-test is given in tables 1, 2.

As it can be inferred from the above table, the average of the variable of training courses consistency with market demand is 2.425 and lower than 3. It shows that in respondents' opinion in the sample of this research courses related to translating political and journalistic texts in translator training program at higher education in Iran are not consistent with media market demands. Regarding obtained t statistics ($t = -7.667$) and significance level lower than 0.05 it is specified that obtained results can be generalized to statistical population and therefore it can be stated that courses on translating journalistic and political texts in universities are not in consistency with market demand, and thus the research hypothesis is approved.

Conclusion

The consistency between courses on translating journalistic and political texts and the marker demands was investigated in this research. Results suggested that there is no consistency between academic courses and market demand in media field. It seems necessary to consider needs of the respective markets in the translation courses so that would-be-translators can successfully accomplish their future jobs as translators. Current syllabus should be restructured so that new components are included according to professional demands.

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Appendix A

- What is translation direction in your institute?
English to Persian
Persian to English
- What are priorities of text types of translation competency in news translators in your institute? (assign 1-4 priorities)
Political economic sport social

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Idea
3. Translator training curriculum of university equips students with skills required in recruitment as journalistic translator					
4. translator training curriculum should be changed so that skills required by journalistic translation are taught better					
5. Experts acting in journalism area should be utilized in order to optimize journalistic text translation course					
6. Do you agree to cooperate with universities as field expert in news translation training?	Yes No				
7. Priorities of English language skills for journalistic texts translator (from Persian to English) (assign priorities)	Writing Listening		Speaking Reading		
8. Priorities of Persian language skills for journalistic texts translator (from English to Persian) (assign priorities)	Writing Listening		Speaking Reading		
9. Priorities in focus on Persian language skills in university courses (in translating from English to Persian)	Writing Listening		Speaking Reading		

(assign priorities)					
10. Priorities in focus on English language skills in university courses (in translating from Persian to English) (assign priorities)	Writing Listening		Speaking Reading		
11. Priorities given to suggestions for gaining readiness in order to be recruited by news agencies as translator (assign priorities)	a. Memorization of journalistic terms b. Reading English news c. Listening to English news d. Improving writing skill (in target language)				
12. Other suggestions					
13. Necessity of familiarity with PC related skills, especially word typing for translators					
14. Necessity of using translation aid software to help translators					
15. Priorities of software familiarization for translators (assign priorities)	a. Microsoft Office PowerPoint b. Microsoft Office Word c. Internet Explorer d. Outlook				
16. Please mention other software if you use					
17. Familiarity with the political situation in the world is important in recruitment of translators					
18. Content and structural adjustment is task of editors, not translators					
19. Just using print media as sources of foreign news					
20. Using audio-visual media as sources of foreign news					
21. Willingness to accept apprentice					

without pay					
22. Lack of sufficient familiarity with Persian language as the main problem of news translators					
23. Readiness of translator training major graduates for journalism translation from the outset					
24. Translator training graduates as the most frequent applicants of the journalistic text translation					
25. If news translators with academic majors other than translation are working in your institute, please mentioned their academic majors					

26. If you translation direction is from English to Persian, please mention media you use as news sources (newspaper/news website)
a. b. c. d. Other.
27. If you translation direction is from Persian to English, please mention media you use as news sources (newspaper/news website)
a. b. c. d. Other.
28. Importance of having university degree for translator
a. very important b. low importance c. no matter
29. Importance of having university degree at translation studies for translator
a. very important b. low importance c. no matter
30. University degree of translator
a. BA b. MA c. PhD